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LIZ SMITH

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John Le Carre's half-sister Charlotte Cromwell is penning her first novel, to be set in Nicaragua where she has worked with the rebels there.... The CIA's hot whisper is that Castro now has himself guarded by a trained watch-snake, a giant python, ready to strike. Castro and his aides are protected by wearing a certain scent. (If this sounds crazy, remember, we thought the stories of the CIA attempts to assassinate Castro sounded crazy, too. But they were all true.)